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ABSTRACT

This progress report summarizes evaluation findings for the Janesville, Wisconsin, Learning Disabilities Program for 1982-83, which served 360 students with approximately 27 certified instructors. Past findings are listed for self-concept; teacher, parent, and administrator reactions; identification of LD students; and student achievement. Findings for the current year are in the areas of mainstreaming (e.g., approximately 15% of the LD students decreased the amount of time spent in the LD program) and achievement (e.g., a high level of reading growth has been maintained, spelling growth has increased, and math growth has declined over the past 3 years). The report concludes that student achievement data and survey responses of parents, teachers, and administrators indicate the program is a success. Changes in future evaluation strategies are noted. (CL)

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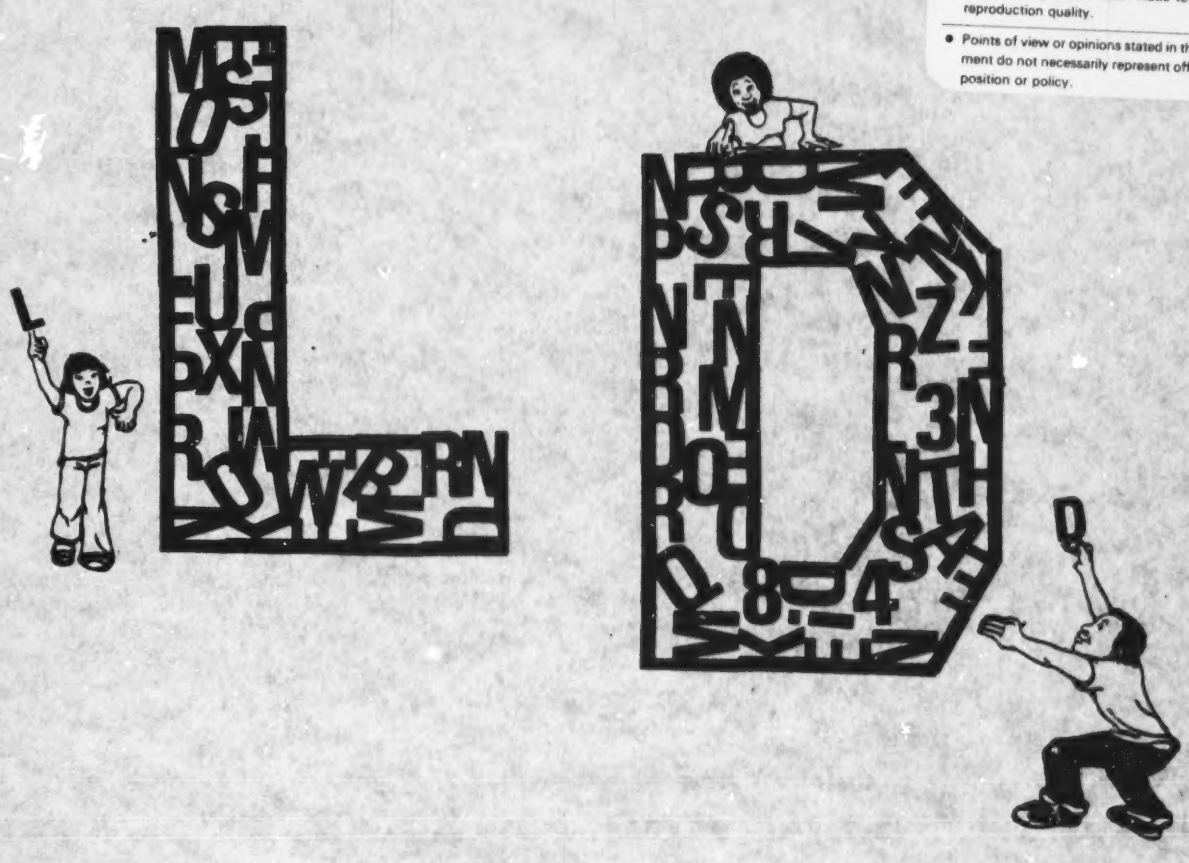

# PROGRESS REPORT

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF JANESVILLE

August 1983

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PROGRAM EVALUATION

LEARNING DISABILITIES

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF JANESVILLE
Janesville, Wisconsin

1982-1983

Authored by
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The Learning Disabilities Program began in Janesville during the 1971-1972 school year. The program served 16 students with two fully certified instructors. The total cost for the first year of operation was approximately $27,000. Growth continued through the next ten years. During the 1982-1983 school year the program served approximately 360 students with approximately 27 certified instructors at a cost of over $700,000. It was this tremendous growth that prompted the undertaking of the program evaluation contained in this document.

## BACKGROUND

During the 1980-1981 school year, the Special Education administrative staff reviewed the available literature and conferred with University and Department of Public Instruction special education and evaluation experts. Finding minimal practical advice and/or useful guidelines, we developed our own program evaluation model. That model consisted of a review of all existing data on every L.D. student, the yearly testing of each L.D. student with the Wide Range Achievement Test in April, asking the parents of each L.D. student to complete a survey, having each L.D. student complete the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale, surveying all of the administrators and Special Education teachers, and surveying one-third of the district's regular education staff.

## PAST FINDINGS

### Self Concepts

We used the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale to determine the self concepts of our students. Although one might expect these children to be frustrated and to have a low self concept because of that frustration, the results of this test indicated that this was not the case in Janesville. On the average, our students scored at the 48th percentile, much above their percentile scores in the academic areas. We interpreted this to mean that, on the average, our children had "normal" self concepts.

### Opinion Surveys

Because the evaluation was a request from a local tax group, we decided that one measure of our success should be the support we get from the teachers, administrators, and parents of our children. The results of these surveys indicated that the parents believed the program to be effective, successful, and appropriate for their children. While 75% of the school staff believed the Learning Disability program allowed learning disabled children to make more academic progress than they would in regular education, 92% of the school staff were "satisfied" with the overall operation of the program. In essence, all groups surveyed were supportive of the Learning Disabilities program.

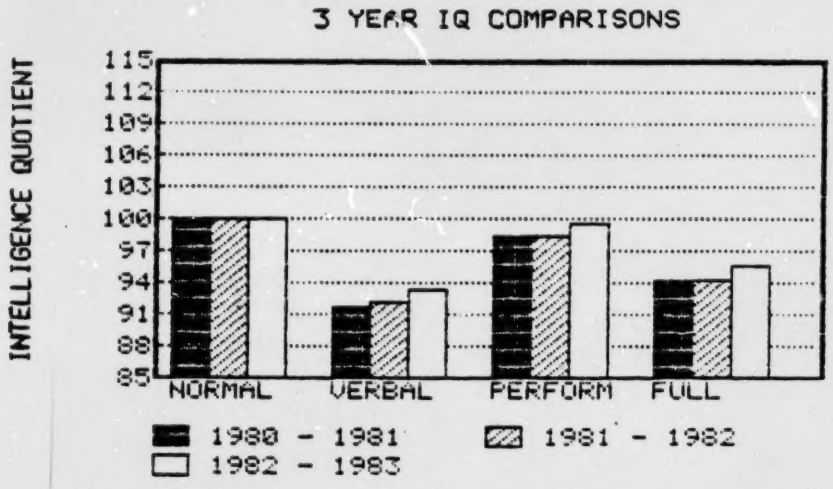


Figure #1

Identification

One essential characteristic of learning disabled students is that they have "average" intelligence. As can be seen in Figure 1, the I.Q. of the identified learning disabled students was a bit low, but was still able to be considered with in the average range. The second major measureable criteria is a significant discrepancy between achievement and potential. (It should be mentioned at this point that inherent in the understanding of this discussion is the issue of whether either the WISC-R or the WRAT accurately reflect what is purported to be measured. This discussion assumes that both tests are at least reasonably valid indicators.) The comparison between the full scale I.Q. and the standard scores at identification was interpreted to mean that these students were achieving at significantly lower levels (see Figure 2) than their potential would indicate. In essence, we were accurately identifying students with "severe" learning problems. In addition, although the severity of the deficit has remained constant, the I.Q. and achievement levels of the L.D. students at the time of their identification has shown a slow but steady increase over the past three years.

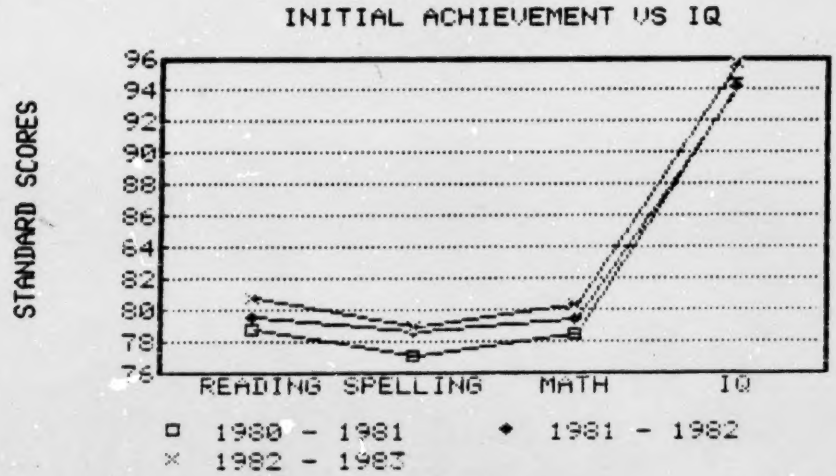


Figure #2

Achievement

During the past three years we have measured standard score growth for reading, spelling and mathematics. The assumption in the measure we used, standard scores, is that normal growth is expected and is indicated by an identical standard score from one year to the next, much like percentiles. When we report an increase in the average standard score, we interpret that to indicate a greater than expected achievement gain. As can be seen in figure 3, we have been able to report a much greater than average standard score gain in all three areas for the past three years, except for the 1982-1983 math scores. To summarize the academic results, we can safely say that the Learning Disability program is showing greater than expected achievement gains, especially when we take into account the fact that the students who achieve the greatest gains are typically mainstreamed, and therefore not included in our data.

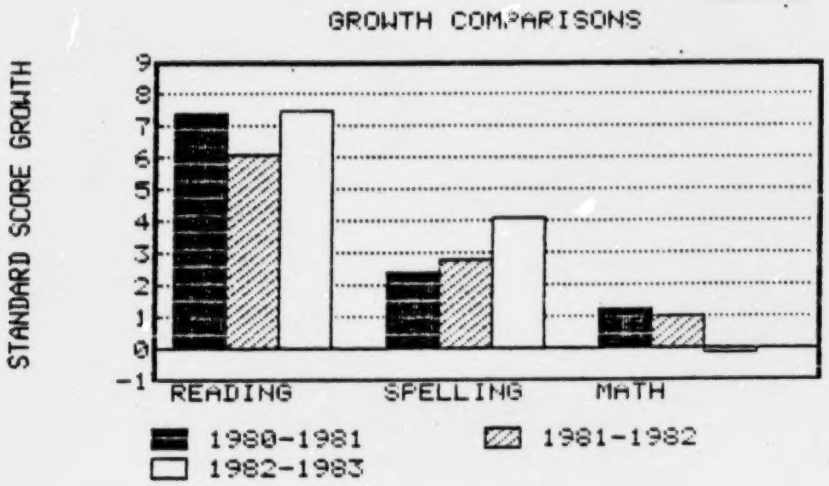


**Figure #3**

FINDINGS - 1982-1983

Mainstreaming

One indication of success for our program is the number of students who are mainstreamed back into regular education during the year. Our goal is to remediate a student's difficulties to the point where the student can successfully re-enter regular education classes. This is the first year we were able to accurately report the extent to which our students were "mainstreamed" during the 1982-1983 school year. Figure 4 is a pie graph which indicates that, during the past year, approximately 15% of the identified LD students decreased the amount of time they spent in the LD program. Approximately 15% of the LD students who received instruction in the LD room at the beginning of the year now receive a greater part of their education in the regular education setting.

FROM SP ED TO REGULAR ED

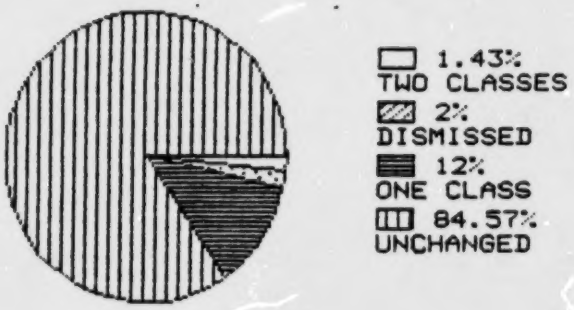


**Figure #4**

Achievement

As previously seen (see figure 3), above average standard score growth is the norm for students in the LD program. A more indepth look at those figures indicate that a high level of reading growth has been maintained, that spelling growth has been increased, and that math growth has shown a decline over the past three years. These data should be viewed in light of curricular changes which have been made in the Learning Disabilities program in the last three years.

The reading program has seen the emergence of program consistency. While this has always been the emphasis in the Learning Disabilities programs, we have recently undergone an examination of our reading program. We have piloted several reading programs during the past years and have adopted two reading series at the elementary level. It remains to be seen what effect this will have on the growth rates in reading in the future.

The spelling scores show a steady increase during the past three years. It is hoped that this reflects our decision to standardize our spelling series. Two years ago, after a one year pilot study, we decided to concentrate on the direct teaching of spelling using the SRA Spelling Mastery series which has since been accepted by the district as an alternative spelling program. Because this program can be used through the ninth grade, and because we are piloting a written expression curriculum during the coming year, we expect these spelling growth scores to continue their increase in the coming years.

Math growth scores have been somewhat of a disappointment over the past three years. It should be noted at the outset that only about half of our students receive math instruction in the Learning Disability program. Most of our teachers seem to believe that the standard math text as adopted by the district is appropriate for math instruction in the Learning Disability program. Perhaps, as may be indicated by the declining math growth scores, this has not been a wise decision. The decline in growth does not indicate that the students are not learning. It does indicate that the students are learning at the same rate as all other students.

## CONCLUSIONS

During the past three years we have generated the data to support our contention that the Learning Disability program is successful. Parents, teachers, and administrators believe that it is successful, and the academic and self-concept scores support their beliefs. We are identifying a population of students who are not achieving to their potential, and returning a significant number of these children to their regular education classes.

## FUTURE

Because the district has decided to use a different district-wide standardized test which can be given out of level, the basis of this report of the evaluation will undergo a significant change. The data previously generated on an annual basis will no longer be available. The data base upon which a report of this nature is dependent will not be present next year but should be able to be generated after the 1985-1986 school year. It is hoped that the reports and data generated during the previous three years will have shown, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the efficacy of our programs for the Learning Disabled.